11-12-1947

The Chinese Policy of the United States

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To be delivered by Mike Mansfield, M.C. before the Academy of Political Science, Hotel Astor, New York City, November 12, 1947.

THE CHINESE POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES

Misunderstanding of our policy in China arises largely from a failure to understand the nature of American foreign policy itself. Therefore, I think it essential, at the outset, to consider briefly the substance of that policy in terms of three components: objective, pattern and technique. Without a clear comprehension of these distinctions and their respective characteristics, it is difficult to grasp the implications of our China policy or to relate that policy to our activity in other parts of the world.

Let us bear in mind that the objective of American foreign policy is indivisible and constant. Our government seeks the same ultimate ends whether its policy is operating in Europe, in South America, in Asia, or in the United Nations. Furthermore, the objective has remained unchanged since the dawn of the Republic. It is, in the words of the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt, "to defend the honor, the freedom, the rights, the interests and the well-being of the American people". An essential corrollary to our objective, however, is that - again in the words of Mr. Roosevelt - "We seek no gain at the expense of others, We threaten no one, nor do we tolerate threats from others."

In contrast with the fixity and the universality of the objective, the pattern of American policy, which finds its most vivid expression in our great State papers, is gradually evolving. It is the broad blueprint for action which represents the accumulated wisdom of countless American minds. It is the product of the interests, the hopes, and even the fears, of our whole people.

The slow evolution of the pattern of policy is everywhere in evidence. In Latin America a Hemispheric Solidarity emerges from the earlier foundations of the Monroe Doctrine. In Europe we move from a concept of isolation to a deep concern in the political and economic fortunes of that continent. And in Asia, too, there is the same gradual flux of the pattern in the interest of the objective.

The Third component of policy - technique - concerns the instruments we use within the pattern to achieve the objective. It consists of all the measures - diplomatic, political, cultural and economic - that are employed in meeting the exigencies of international relations. In the last analysis, it includes, too, military measures - whether force, threat of force, or the acquisition of strategic bases. In contrast to the fixed objective and the evolving pattern, the technique of foreign policy must remain flexible, and responsive to changing conditions. Any other course, in a complex and unstable world, would be an invitation to disaster

With these three distinctions - objective, pattern, and technique - in mind let us examine the historical development of the Chinese policy of the United States. The objective of our policy in China does not differ from the overall objective of American policy. We are concerned as much with "the honor, the freedom, the rights and interests and the well-being of the American people" in our relations with China as we are in our relations with Britain, with France, or with Russia.

However, as our interests have broadened and our world responsibilities have increased, the pattern of Chinese policy has undergone a slow evolution. During the early period of our relationships with the Manchu Empire, China was still too remote, too unknown a factor, to loom largely in the thinking of the American people. The initial pattern of government policy

reflects largely concern for our shipping interests and the safety of our missionaries. We wanted "equal commercial opportunity" with European merchants for our traders. When the British opened Chinese ports to their citizens, ours also gained entrance. And when they established extra-territoriality, we did the same. In this early period we avoided annexation of alien territory, resorting primarily to a technique of diplomacy to secure our objective.

By the turn of the century, however, there were indications that "equal commercial opportunity" was inadequate in the face of mounting imperialistic pressures on China. It was at this point that John Hay circulated his now famous "Open "Door" notes among the Great Powers. And when it became evident that even this step was unlikely to stem the predatory tendencies of other powers, especially Japan and Russia, we expanded "The Open Door" to embrace the principle of maintaining the "independence and integrity of China." But we soon discovered that diplomacy could operate as a technique for fulfilling this pattern only if there existed a balance of power in the Far East. This balance was upset by the First World War. From that conflict, Japan emerged as the dominant force in Eastern Asia.

Nevertheless, at the Washington Conference of 1922, an attempt was made to maintain the "Open Door" and China's "independence and territorial integrity" through normal diplomatic methods. We sacrificed a part of our military potential in the Pacific, in return for Japan's pledges to forego further expansion. Under the pressure of its military leaders, Japan in 1931 turned from the ways of peace.

For fully another decade, however, we sought to preserve the pattern of the "Open Door" and of China's "territorial integrity" without resort to military techniques. We wrote notes. We engaged in conversations. We spoke angrily. We spoke softly. But the Japanese military machine rolled onward into Mongolia, North China, and the Yangtze valley and South China.

By 1940, with Japanese armies straddling the coastline of East Asia from Korea and Manchuria to Indo-China - and spearheaded deeply into the body of the continent - and with Europe set aflame by Germany, it had ceased to be a question of maintaining the pattern of our policy. The American people were faced with the inexorable reality of a free America possibly standing alone in a hostile, totalitarian world.

American public opinion began to shift rapidly. So, too, did our technique of policy. To the exhausted diplomatic measures we had taken against Japan, we added economic measures in the form of aid to China and restrictions on trade with Japan. We extended Lend-Lease to the hard-pressed Chinese and with the "Flying Tigers", spread an airwover over their defenseless cities. Finally we reached that point in the tide of history when a reassertion of the pattern of our policy in China and the Far East, coupled with our activities elsewhere in the world, offered the last hope of defending beyond our shores "the honor, the freedom, the rights, the interests, and the well-being of the American people".

The complexities of the war involved the United States in the affairs of China to an unprecedented degree. Economic and military problems of the joint struggle against Japan forced our Government to take an increasing concern in the internal problems of China: - a course which we would normally have avoided. The United States dealt officially only with the

National Government of Chiang Kai-shek to which, theoretically at any rate, the Chinese Communists adhered. Vital considerations connected with the war, however, made it essential for us to try to forestall a rupture in even the theoretical unity of Chinese resistance - a rupture which conceivably could have lengthened the war. There is nothing contestable in this approach. It was essentially the same technique that was employed in France, in Italy, and in Poland. It was predicated on a recognition of the hard reality of the cost of the war in terms of American lives and resources.

While aiding China internally to maintain its unity and to remain in the field against Japan, we were seeking also to build up China's international position in order to prepare the Chinese for a possible expansion of their role in the postwar world. First of all, we recognized China as one of the Big Four of the war against the Axis. In 1943 we abandoned extra-territoriality and wiped out the stigma of Chinese exclusion. At the Cairo Conference, in December, 1943, we endorsed the principle of the return of all Chinese territory seized by Japan. Still later we accepted China as one of the Five Great Powers in the United Nations. Throughout the war our assistance went exclusively to the Central Government and we interfered as little as circumstances would permit in internal Chinese affairs. In line with the traditional pattern of American policy, we desired an independent China at the end of hostilities, not an administrative and military appendage of the United States.

But peace found us, notwithstanding our desire to the contrary, deeply enmeshed in Chinese affairs. It was impossible to extricate ourselves immediately with the firing of the last shot. We faced a drastically altered

situation in the Far East. The shattering of the Japanese Empire had left a hugh vacuum. Into it had rushed new power from Soviet Asia, through Manchuria to Dairen and Port Arthur, and over the border into Korea to the thirty-eighth parallel. On the other hand, American Forces occupied Japan, the Ryukyus, and Southern Korea. Between these new frontiers of power lay the seething uncertainty of China; a China on the verge of economic collapse and already in the first throes of renewed civil war.

In this chaotic situation, the need for redefining the pattern of our Chinese policy became imperative. It was forthcoming in President Truman's policy statement of December 16, 1945. Linking the Chinese situation to our faith in the future of the United Nations, the President declared that, "it is the firm belief of this Government that a strong, united and democratic China is of the utmost importance to the success of this United Nations Organization and for world peace." Let us consider, for a moment, the implications of this statement. Is it in accord with the fundamental objective of our foreign policy? It is. The defense of the well-being of the American people is inextricably bound up with the question of the maintenance of peace. Peace, in turn, will be influenced profoundly by the international position and the internal conditions of China. Is it a natural extension of the historical pattern of our policy in China? It is. We have come a long way from the "equal commercial opportunity" through the "Open Door" and the "maintenance of China's independence and territorial integrity", to the present "strong, united and democratic China". But this logical and inevitable evolution has developed through the interrelation of our expanded interests, our world position, and our power and the great political changes in the world has undergone.

The President's December 16th statement contains two factors that warrant careful examination. There is, first of all, the frank acknowledgement of our obligations to the National Government of China. And secondly, there is the whole body of measures and methods with which we hope to realize the pattern of our present policy. It was absolutely essential to aid the Central Government in the transportation of its troops to disarm and to evacuate the Japanese, if for no other reason than that we had committed ourselves to do so. We extended this help in spite of strong counter-pressures at home and in the face of violent opposition from the Chinese Communists. We extended it even at the cost of American lives. We would have preferred to help an internally-unified China. But in the absence of unity we aided the Central Government exclusively--the Government we had dealt with throughout the war; the Government we recognized as the legal authority of the Chinese nation.

Let us now consider the methods and measures through which we hope to see realized the pattern of "a strong, united and democratic China." I must stress that these measures and methods concern the technique of foreign policy and, consequently, there is no virtue per se in their consistency. Rather, within the limits of our moral and ethical concepts, these measures and methods must remain flexible and adaptable, to meet ever-changing problems. I emphasize this because those who delight in pointing out the inconsistencies of our foreign policy usually are thinking in terms of its technique.

Paramount among our methods in China is continued recognition of the National Government and cooperation, internationally, with that Government. One need not have access to secret State Department documents to recognize

that this procedure is still being followed. In the international field, our support of China's National Government has been imposingly steady. We have backed Nanking officially on the reparations issue in Manchuria, and we have sought by diplomatic pressure to assist in the restoration of Chinese administration to Dairen and Port Arthur. Still another evidence of our support for the National Government was given by Secretary Marshall at Moscow in the spring of 1947. He refused to permit the discussion of the China Question without the consent of the Chinese. The effectiveness of this measure was attested to by the approving demonstrations which greeted it in Nanking, Peiping and Shanghai.

Our technique with regard to the internal situation in China is also clearly indicated in President Truman's statement. He has placed primary responsibility for the establishment of peace and unity on the Chinese themselves, and asserted that we will not intervene to influence the course of any civil strife. At the same time he has pointed out that our interest in the peace of the world gives us a concomitant interest in a peaceful China. Therefore, he suggested that the Chinese take certain steps to promote internal stability. Among these were the cessation of hostilities, the convening of a national political conference to solve the problem of internal unity through a modification of the one-party dictatorship, and finally the integrating of all Chinese armed forces into a national army. To help bring about these changes, the President dispatched General Marshall to China. Further, he held out to a unified China the offer of reasonable aid in economic rehabilitation and assistance in the reconstruction of its military organization.

How adequate was this technique? At first, it seemed on the verge of success. A delicate settlement covering all the major problems of unity was put together with infinite care. Bitternesses and hatreds and suspicions of twenty or more years' duration were reconciled at least temporarily. Success was never a certainty. That it had ever become a hope was a remarkable tribute to the pertinacity and wisdom of General Marshall. The shattering of that great hope, as you will remember, came in the spring of 1946 - at the very moment of fruition. General Marshall had returned to America to report to President Truman. Within a week of his departure from China the Communists were accusing the Nationalists of failing to relinquish one-party control of the Government. And the Nationalists were charging the Communists with attempting to set up a puppet regime in Manchuria.

Actually it matters little now who fired the first shot. General Marshall later blamed the extremists of both parties for the failure of mediation. What is significant is that the most determined efforts of one of our ablest officials had been insufficient to halt the renewal of strife. In effect, the breakdown of peace condemned the Chinese people to an indefinite continuation of the miseries of the previous eight years. The vision of peace, which had flared so brightly in the spring of 1946, dimmed steadily during the late summer and autumn. Occasional contacts of opposing forces gave way to skirmishes. Skirmishes grew into pitched battles. Chinese again killed Chinese, and in ever-increasing numbers. We had little to show for our efforts except mounting hostility from large sections of the Chinese people. They vented the bitterness of their frustrated hopes on the peace-makers.

Almost a year to the day after his first pronouncement on China policy, President Truman acknowledged the failure of our efforts to quell the civil war. On December 18, 1946, he issued a second statement indicating that while the basic pattern of our policy still remained, some of the instrumentalities with which we sought to operate would have to be held in abeyance. Since the return of General Marshall, and following the rapid withdrawal of American military forces during the early months of this year, there has been no significant change in our methods of dealing with the Chinese situation. We still actively support the sovereignty of China and the government of Chiang Kai-shek. A definite proposal of economic aid and assistance, amounting to $300,000,000, is now under consideration. We must keep in mind, however, that China does not at the present time -- in the words of Secretary Marshall -- "possess the basis for rehabilitation that Western Europe does." Civil War now rages throughout North China and Manchuria. Other areas are in a state of incipient separatism. The Communists are resorting to their old extremist tactics of brutal terrorism.

That we regret this situation, that we sympathize with the Chinese people goes without saying. But it is equally true that there is little we can do, as our experience has shown, to alleviate their difficulties. Nevertheless, powerful and capable voices are heard in the United States urging us immediately to project ourselves into the middle of this problem of China. Let us, for a moment, consider the views of those who object to the abeyant state of our policy in China. Many Americans have a deep and sincere affection for the Chinese. Among them there are those who point out that it is ignoble of us to forsake our wartime allies in their hour of need. Therefore, they insist, let us do something for China, and let us do it through the living symbol of China's resistance, Chiang Kai-shek.

Let me, first of all, make clear the extent of aid already made available to the National Government. I have alluded to the postwar military and international assistance which we have tendered to President Chiang. Mention should also be made of the American Army and Navy missions still in China to help establish a truly national military organization. Since 1941 total aid in the form of loans and grants is in the neighborhood of two and a half billion dollars. In addition we have transferred extensive quantities of surplus property at a fraction of original cost. We have also turned over 271 Naval vessels. This year the United States Foreign Relief Program will allot $27.7 million in medical supplies and food to China.

Furthermore, the United States stands committed to provide additional assistance for non-civil war purposes as the circumstances permit. When there is some assurance that our aid will assist in the restoration of the well-being of the Chinese people, its flow should increase. Those who are sincerely distressed over the plight of China, need have no fear. The United States Government will do all in its power to lessen the sufferings of the Chinese people, but will resist firmly all ill-considered efforts to have it add to their distress. The great shortcoming of many who insist, vaguely, that we "do something" for China is that they fail to realize the limitations as to what we can do. We can stand beside the Chinese as sympathetic friends. We can help them through our private charities, our Christian missions, our educational and cultural endowments, and through governmental grants or loans to meet their most pressing needs. All these measures we have taken and will continue to take. But we cannot supply the spiritual spark which will release the capacities of the Chinese people

and channel them into a reconstruction of their noble civilization. That spark can - and will someday - come only from the heart of China itself.

Before concluding, I should like to discuss briefly another line of thought in opposition to the present relative abeyance of our Chinese policy. I am fully aware that there is a growing advocacy in the United States for action to halt the spread of Communism in China. Briefly, it consists of several fundamental assumptions: that we cannot permit any foreign power to dominate China; that it is futile to halt Communism in Greece and not to halt it in China; that unless aid, both economic and military, is extended immediately, the Central Government of China will collapse; and finally that such aid will be much cheaper than grandiose Marshall Plans for Europe. One of the most disturbing factors in the views of those who insist on positive action is their assumption that the United States Government is unaware that China and Russia have a common border of several thousand miles. I wish to reassure these people. The Government is not only aware of the existence of this boundary but has been considering it in terms of the ultimate objective of American foreign policy for more than half a century! Let us, then, at least concede a measure of validity to the decisions which grow out of this experience and the day-to-day reports of trained observers in the field.

I shall avoid a detailed discussion of the problems, both military and economic, which would be involved in positive action in China. Suffice to say, despite specious arguments to the contrary, that they would be monumental. As an instance, let me recall the widespread hostility demonstrated just a year ago by the most politically-conscious elements in China - the students - against the continued presence of American troops in China. And those troops were there with the peaceful intent of attempt-

ing to maintain the Nationalist-Communist truce. What would be the reaction if they were in China for the express purpose of assisting one section of the Chinese people against another? Those who advocate a return of American forces to Chinese soil in large numbers - and a program of "positive action" would ultimately involve precisely that - show an abysmal or arrogant indifference to one of the most powerful forces in Chinese life today - nationalism. They would take on for America the same heritage of hatred that the Russians are now busy constructing for themselves in Dairen and Port Arthur.

Finally, let me point out the fallacy of assuming that since we are taking positive steps to aid Greece and Western Europe, we must take similar action in China. The pattern of our Chinese policy is concerned with the establishment of a "strong, united and democratic China". I assume that there is general agreement with this concept among Americans, although there may be legitimate disagreement over the technique for realizing it. Obviously, such a pattern cannot prevail if China is dominated by an outside power. I think it legitimate to assume that our Government is capable of making this simple deduction and therefore may be counted upon to apply measures necessary to support China's sovereignty against any outside power. But the United States, in selecting the methods for implementing its policy in China, must weigh all the factors in the world situation against the resources it has available. It must mesh activity in China with that in the Far East, in Europe, and even in Latin America. In pursuit of our objective in Asia we must not permit ourselves to be hastened into any action which would result in a partial fulfillment of our objective elsewhere or even in China itself.

The Chinese policy of the United States must continue to be considered in the light of reality and with due regard given to all the factors involved. This calls for intelligent action, unremitting patience and a determination to follow through at the right time and in the right way in the achievement of the objective of American foreign policy -- all over the world.